Issue

01

MARQUE

Branding, Design and Digital



October 2026

Let's Gone!

No, we haven't made a grammatical mistake.

The phrase first appeared on a hand-painted sign at a Warriors game in 2013. It was deliberately incorrect, mildly ridiculous, and, as it turned out, remarkably durable.

And more recently, "Up the Wahs" has elbowed its way into the Kiwi lexicon, born from Otago Uni students taking the proverbial out of commentator Peter Ropati's distinctive pronunciation of "Warriors". What started as "woe woes" eventually became "the Wahs".

Neither expression came from the club.

Both became part of it.

That tells you something about the Warriors brand.

It has always had a slightly unruly quality.

By the time you read this, the Warriors' season is over. But win or lose, this story isn't about results on the field. It's about the brand they've built with their fans.

In our first newsletter our lead article looks at how the Warriors became one of the most talked-about brands in New Zealand.

Not by inventing a slogan, but by recognising when to shape the story – and when to step aside.

It's a distinction many organisations get wrong. Some try to manufacture a culture, only to find nobody believes or repeats it. Others stand back completely and hope something compelling will emerge on its own.

The real skill lies in knowing when to lead, when to create the conditions for others to participate, and when to let the brand take on a life of its own.

We also hear from Tellus, a client–agency relationship platform, on what clients value most from their agencies and where those relationships start to break down.

In our work section, we show how strategic thinking for Nu Wall was translated into a refreshed visual identity, communications and real-world brand experience.

Back to the Warriors story – sometimes the audience gives you something worth keeping. Bad grammar included.

In our next edition we will kōrero about te ao Māori and branding. Enjoy.



"If you build it, they will come"

In the movie Field of Dreams, a voice in an Iowa cornfield tells Kevin Costner's character, "If you build it, he will come." We've taken a liberty with the pronoun; "they" makes a better opening line for an article about filling a stadium.

It's tempting to read what follows as a story about cheap tickets. It isn't. The ticket price wasn't the end goal; it was what got everyone through the gate. Cameron George, CEO of the One New Zealand Warriors, wasn't choosing to earn less. He was choosing where to earn it.

"We could have half a stadium full by charging more, or we could have a full stadium."

The Full House Strategy

A full stadium does more than sell tickets. It creates noise, energy and spectacle. It drives merchandise sales, attracts attention and makes the whole property more valuable to sponsors. The Warriors haven't simply increased demand for tickets. They have increased the value of everything around them. They have done this by building a bigger stage for their supporters.

We call this The Full House Strategy.

That decision became especially important after the club's 1,038-day COVID exile. The team could still train, compete and fulfil fixtures in Australia, but as Cameron George said:

"One of the things through COVID that we experienced was losing that fan connection. So that's why we doubled down on the way back."

The reset recognised that the crowd was not merely background scenery to the game. It was part of the product.

The evidence is hard to miss.

Demand now extends well beyond match day. Corporate hospitality is booking out before the season begins, while pop-up stores have become destinations for fans in their own right.

Just as importantly, the audience is now much broader than the traditional stereotype of the rugby league supporter.

The club has not achieved this by positioning itself as a more respectable version of rugby union.

It has simply given more people more ways in.

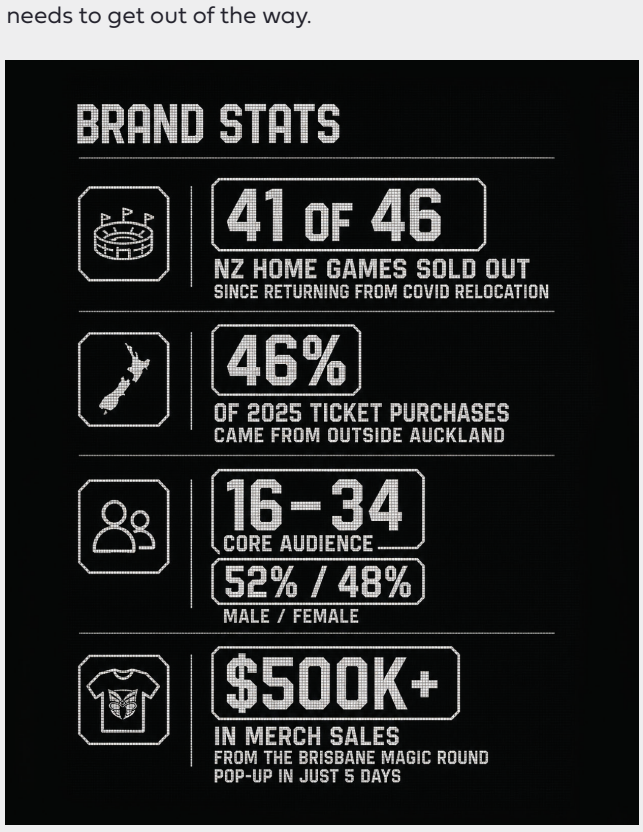
That matters because brands can become diluted when organisations try to manage every aspect of them. Culture is especially vulnerable. The instinct is to tidy it up, standardise it and make sure everything is "on brand".

Knowing when to get out of the way

Knowing when to get out of the way has become one of the clearest parts of the Warriors' brand strategy.

Some of the strongest elements of the brand were created by supporters. The job was not to rewrite them, but to recognise them, give them legitimacy and let them travel.

That does not mean doing nothing. It means knowing what the business needs to build and when it simply needs to get out of the way.



The game remains at the centre, but the relationship now stretches well beyond it.

For New Zealanders living in Queensland, an away fixture is more than entertainment. It becomes a place to reconnect with home and with fellow New Zealanders. A jersey signals identity. A walk up Caxton Street becomes a march.

The Warriors do not need to steal supporters from the Broncos or Titans. They are serving a large New Zealand audience that was already there.

Wahsworld takes that idea further. Ahead of the Warriors' Gold Coast fixture, Dreamworld temporarily becomes Wahsworld as part of a three-year partnership. Again, the demand already exists. The Warriors are simply creating somewhere for it to gather.

This creates a useful brand-building sequence.

- **A full stadium creates atmosphere.**
- **Atmosphere attracts attention.**
- **Attention encourages participation.**
- **Participation strengthens belonging.**
- **Belonging builds brand value.**
- **The order matters.**

Begin by maximising the return from every customer, and you may improve the return on a seat. Begin by filling the stadium, and you increase the value of the experience for both the brand and its customers.

The Warriors' challenge is not only to keep filling the stadium. It is to protect the reasons people wanted to come in the first place.

The voice in the cornfield never built anything. Neither did cheap tickets. The Warriors created something people felt was worth being part of. The crowd did the rest.

Until next time, and Up the Wahs!



The agency relationship gap









“We love ‘em, the support they’ve given us, the movement Up the Wahs, all that stuff. We couldn’t have done it without them”

Coach. Andrew Webster

Two agencies. Both strategically and creatively capable. Both producing good thinking. Yet when their client relationships were measured, one scored 95 out of 100 and the other 61.

The difference wasn’t simply about the quality of the ideas. It was what happened around them.

OVERALL RELATIONSHIP SCORE

95	vs	61
HIGH-PERFORMING RELATIONSHIP		LOWER-PERFORMING RELATIONSHIP

In the stronger relationship, the highest scores were for trust, responsiveness, communication, reliability and ease of working.

You could call that **operating trust.**

The lower-scoring agency was still rated strongly for creativity, strategic thinking and capability. Talent wasn’t the problem. The problem was the friction within the working relationship.

WHERE FRICTION SHOWED UP (OUT OF 5)

2.8	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.2
BUDGET MANAGEMENT	WORKING COLLABORATIVELY	EASE OF WORKING	APPLYING LEARNINGS	EXECUTING BRIEFS

Leadership saw the relationship differently.

INTERNAL PERCEPTION GAP (OVERALL SCORE)

73	→	57	→	46
SENIOR LEADERSHIP		DAY-TO-DAY TEAM		CLOSEST TO DELIVERY

That makes sense. Senior people tend to experience the strategic ambition, chemistry and bigger-picture value. The people making the work happen experience the feedback loops, changing requirements, approvals, budgets, timelines and rework.

So the collaboration can feel more positive at the top than it does in delivery.

That matters because **strategic value only counts if clients can actually use it.**

Even the strongest thinking needs the right relationship around it. When an agency and client work well together, ideas are easier to understand, easier to approve and, most importantly, easier to put into practice.

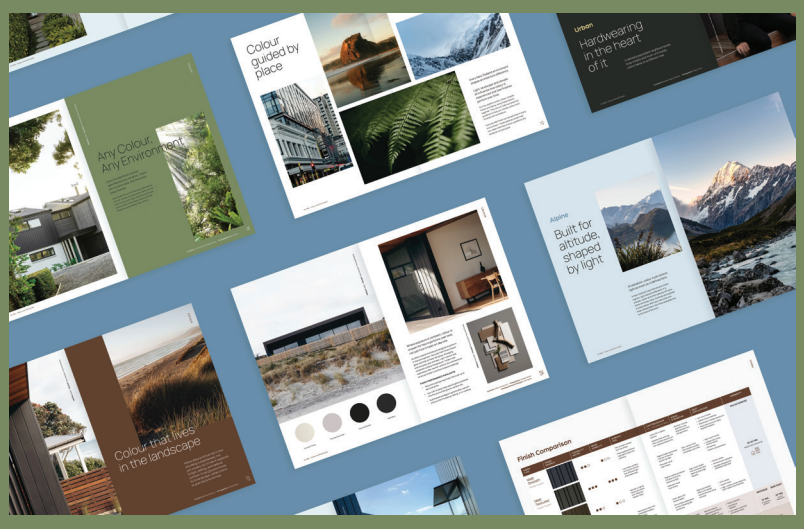
The problem is that relationship issues are often hard to spot from inside them. Unless you look at the different parts of the client experience: communication, responsiveness, clarity, delivery and trust, the gap between an agency’s potential and what the client actually experiences can remain surprisingly well hidden.

About Tellus: Tellus works with leading brands and agencies across New Zealand and Australia, using real client and agency feedback to measure and improve relationship performance. Scan the QR code to learn more about how Tellus measures agency relationships.

Case Study

Nu Wall





For more than 35 years, Nu Wall aluminium cladding has protected and enhanced residential, commercial and civic buildings throughout New Zealand. Proven in some of the country's most demanding environments, it delivers lasting performance, low maintenance and exceptional design flexibility.

Although the product had established a strong reputation, the brand did not fully express the quality, creativity or lifestyle possibilities it offered. Nu Wall needed to move beyond a functional, product-led story and become a more aspirational, design-led brand; one capable of inspiring architects, builders and homeowners alike.

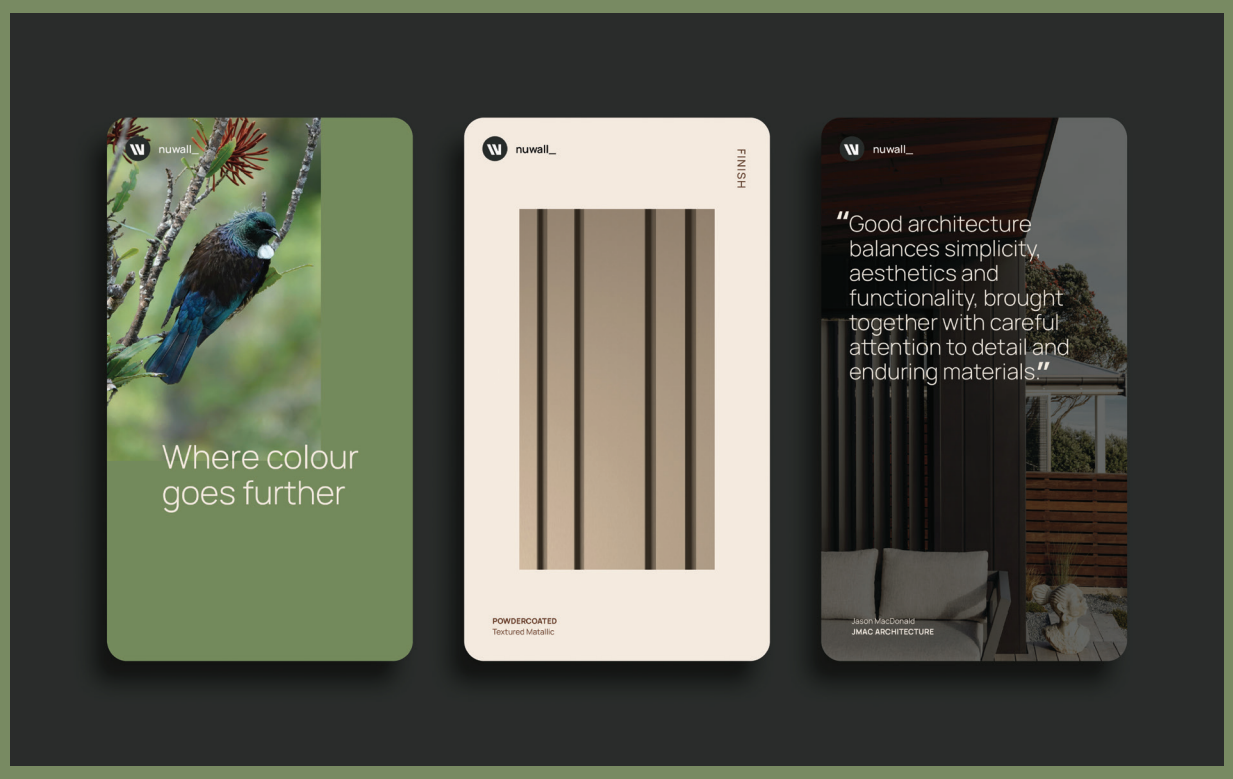
A new brand strategy established Nu Wall's purpose: to shape enduring spaces through cladding systems that perform, protect and inspire for generations. This informed a refreshed brand and visual identity, a more confident, emotionally engaging tone of voice, and the new brand platform: Built to perform. Designed for life.

The visual system celebrates the relationship between architecture, people and place. Coastal, alpine, forest and urban mood boards established four distinctive creative worlds, reflecting the diverse environments in which Nu Wall performs. These worlds were brought to life through colour, original photography and videography shot across five locations, capturing architecture alongside landscape, lifestyle and human experience.

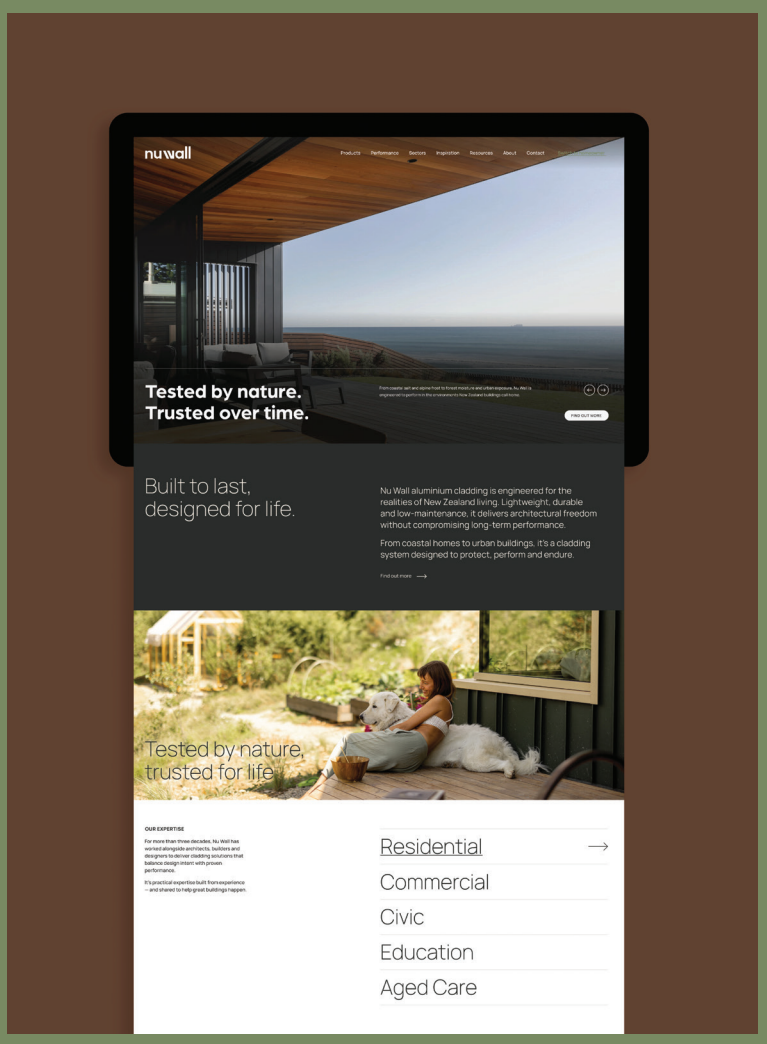
The refreshed identity was then applied across all brand touchpoints, including sales and specification collateral, communications, digital and social assets, and a completely redesigned website.

The result is a cohesive, contemporary brand that preserves Nu Wall's strong foundations in performance and durability while positioning its products as part of something greater: enduring spaces designed to be lived in and enjoyed for generations.

nuwall.co.nz



View the Nu Wall case study



Let's talk.

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